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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes selected results and implications of an intensive field study of the effects of work contexts on the attitudes and performance of personnel employed in social welfare and rehabilitation agencies. A principal objective of this research was to determine the impacts of organizational structure and climate on social welfare and rehabilitation personnel, their attitudes and their performance. A secondary objective was to identify the attitudes of personnel toward a number of specific aspects of their agencies and their work environments. Data were collected in 12 public welfare, 9 private welfare, and 10 public rehabilitation agencies throughout the United States. At each agency, research teams collected information about its organization, structures, and policies from the administrative office; administered a questionnaire to all personnel; and interviewed a sample of service-delivery personnel. The implications of this research are discussed in the following sections of the report: (1) Implications for Supervision; (2) Implications for Administration; (3) Implications for Personnel Management; (4) Implications for Training; and (5) Implications for Organizational Development. (Author/PC)

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Study of Agency Work Contexts:

Program Application Reports, National Study of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Workers, Work and Organizational Contexts

Joseph A. Olmstead and Harold E. Christensen

HUMAN RESOURCES RESEARCH ORGANIZATION
300 North Washington Street • Alexandria, Virginia 22314

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November 1974

Research for

Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
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The research was conducted at HumRRO Division No. 4, Fort Benning, Georgia, by Dr. Joseph A. Olmstead, Senior Scientist, and Dr. Harold E. Christensen, Research Scientist, from May 1972 through October 1973.

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STUDY OF AGENCY WORK CONTEXTS: Program Application Reports, National Study of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Workers, Work and Organizational Contexts

Joseph A. Olmstead and Harold E. Christensen

INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes selected results and implications of an intensive field study of the effects of work contexts upon the attitudes and performance of personnel employed in social welfare and rehabilitation agencies. The principal objective of this research was to determine the impacts of organizational structure and climate upon social welfare and rehabilitation personnel, their attitudes and their performance. A secondary objective was to identify the attitudes of personnel toward a number of specific aspects of their agencies and their work environments.

Data were collected in 12 public welfare, 9 private welfare, and 10 public rehabilitation agencies throughout the United States. Agencies were selected on the bases of type, size, and regional distribution. Within the agencies, data were collected on components devoted to the delivery of social welfare or rehabilitation counseling services. The 31 organizations studied included 10 agencies with fewer than 35 employees, 11 with 35 to 99 employees, and 10 with 100 or more employees. Overall, the agencies ranged in size from 4 to 2,925 and contained a total of 6,397 employees.

At each agency, research teams collected information about its organization, structures, and policies from the administrative officer; administered a questionnaire to all personnel, and interviewed a sample of service-delivery personnel. Data obtained were analyzed to determine how structure and climate impact upon the attitudes and performance of personnel and the performance of the agency, and are reported in RESEARCH REPORT NO. 2 *Effects of Agency Work Contexts: An Intensive Field Study;* National Study of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Workers, Work, and Organizational Contexts, Vols. 1 and 2 (SRS, 1974).

The implications of the research are discussed in the following sections, under the headings "Implications for Supervision," "Implications for Administration," "Implications for Personnel Management," "Implications for Training," and "Implications for Organizational Development."

These sections were released by the Social and Rehabilitation Service as five separate Program Application Reports; they are on sale at the Government Printing Office for 25 cents a copy. Titles of the SRS reports follow:

Program Application Reports:

- No. 1—Study of Agency Work Contexts: Implications for Supervision
- No. 2—Study of Agency Work Contexts: Implications for Administration
- No. 3—Study of Agency Work Contexts: Implications for Personnel Management
- No. 4—Study of Agency Work Contexts: Implications for Training
- No. 5—Study of Agency Work Contexts: Implications for Organizational Development

IMPLICATIONS FOR SUPERVISION

Employees were asked to rate how well their supervisors performed certain leadership functions found to be characteristic of effective supervisors generally. Their response showed that the traditional concept of the supervisor's role needs to be broadened. It is not enough to be boss and trainer; the effective supervisor should also be a source of support and assistance to the group, be able to foster their mutual loyalty and support, represent them to higher levels, and stimulate them to meet performance goals and strive for excellence. Moreover, the effective supervisor performs these functions in a manner that is nondirective and permissive, rather than directive and authoritarian, and open-minded rather than all-knowing.

RESULTS

For this study supervision was considered to be an important dimension of agency climate. As part of their evaluation of climate agency personnel rated their supervisors' performance of a number of specific leadership functions characteristic of effective supervisors in a wide variety of organizations.

These functions are:

- *Support*—provision of emotional support to subordinates and enhancement of subordinates' feelings of importance and self-worth.
- *Work Group Maintenance*—actions to encourage development of work group loyalty and close mutually satisfying relationships among group members.
- *Goal Facilitation*—actions to stimulate enthusiasm for meeting group performance goals and for achieving excellent performance.
- *Work Facilitation*—contribution to the accomplishment of work through such activities as showing subordinates how to improve performance and providing help for solving job-related problems.
- *Representation*—activities concerned with representing the work group to higher agency levels.
- *Technical Competence*—adequacy of knowledge and skill in coping with work-related problems.

In addition, agency personnel rated their supervisors on two dimensions of leadership style:

- *Directiveness*—the extent to which a supervisor is perceived to be directive and authoritarian as opposed to nondirective and permissive.
- *Paternalism (Maternalism)*—the extent to which a supervisor is perceived to be protective and all-knowing as opposed to open-minded and permitting autonomy.

They also evaluated a number of factors that contribute to the climate of organizations and provided ratings of their perceptions, values, and attitudes in relation to a variety of work-related issues.

Data were obtained on absence rates, supervisors' evaluations of employee performance, and the perceptions of personnel concerning agency performance.

Table 1 shows relationships between supervision and agency climate factors, attitudes and values, and performance. The figures in parentheses following each factor are correlation coefficients which indicate the degree of relationship between two variables. Correlation coefficients range from -1.00 to 1.00. A coefficient of 1.00 indicates a perfect positive relationship, i.e., as the strength of one variable increases the other

Table 1

Relationships of Supervision to Agency Climate, Attitudes, Values, and Performance[a]

Climate Factors	Employee Perceptions, Attitudes, and Values	Performance
Clarity of Work Goals (.62)	Role Perceptions (.81)	Agency Performance (.64)
Clarity of Agency Policies (.64)	Work Values (.52)	Employee Performance (.34)
Work Group Relations (.36)	Work Importance (.69)	Absenteeism (−.34)
Agency Structuring of Activities (−.43)	Job Attitudes (.80)	
Agency Practices (Emphases on Rules and Procedures) (−.32)	Performance and Career Goals (.49)	
Agency Stability (.35)	Feelings of Involvement (.76)	
Communication (.86)	Experienced Pressure (−.51)	
	Employee Satisfaction (.83)	

[a]Figures in parentheses are product-moment correlation coefficients.

N = 31 agencies

$p < .05 = .30$

$p < .01 = .42$

variable increases to the same degree. A coefficient of -1.00 indicates a perfect inverse relationship, i.e., as one variable increases the other decreases proportionately. A coefficient of .00 indicates no relationship. Thus, as a coefficient moves away from .00 and approaches 1.00 or -1.00, a stronger positive or inverse relationship is indicated.

The following may be used as a rough guide to the interpretation of both positive and negative coefficients:

.00 to .29—no significant relationship
.30 to .40—low but significant relationship
.40 to .60—moderate relationship
.60 to 1.00—strong relationship

Table 1 shows that supervision impacts upon a large number of climate factors, as well as upon perceptions, attitudes, values, and performance. The number of moderate and high relationships makes it apparent that the quality of supervision can be important, perhaps even critical, to the ways personnel view their agencies, to the work-related attitudes and values that develop among them, and to their performance and that of their agencies.

It is important to note that the type of supervisory behavior related to the factors shown in Table 1 involves effective performance of specific leadership functions--provision of emotional and technical support, maintenance of work group solidarity and effectiveness, facilitation of work group goal accomplishment, facilitation of work activities, technical competence, and representation of work groups to higher levels within an agency. Reinforcing these activities is a leadership style characterized as nondirective and nonpaternalistic (nonmaternalistic). Thus, the kind of supervision which enhances the factors shown in Table 1 requires the effective performance of a number of proven leadership functions in a nondirective and nonpaternalistic manner.

An additional issue examined in the study was the bases of supervisors' influence in social welfare and rehabilitation agencies. No supervisor can be effective unless he can

influence his personnel to perform their duties and perform them in accordance with agency needs and objectives. The issue is, "What are the sources of the influence exercised by supervisors in social welfare and rehabilitation agencies?"

The following possible sources of supervisory power (influence) were studied:

- *Referent Power*—influence based upon personal liking for a supervisor and dentification with him.
- *Expert Power*—influence based upon the supervisor's knowledge, experience, and skill with respect to the work.
- *Reward Power*—influence based upon the supervisor's ability to provide rewards.
- *Coercive Power*—influence based upon the supervisor's ability to punish for noncompliance.
- *Legitimate Power*—influence based on a subordinate's belief that a supervisor has the right to exercise power because of his official position.

Agency personnel rated each source of influence on a scale ranging from 1 to 6 in response to the statement, "I do things my immediate supervisor suggests or wants me to do because . . . . " Table 2 shows the results.

From Table 2 it is clear that the five sources differ considerably in their potential for influencing agency personnel. In terms of relative strength they rank in the following order:

- Expert Power
- Legitimate Power
- Referent Power
- Reward Power
- Coercive Power

The use of rewards (reward power) and punishments (coercive power) was not very effective in social welfare and rehabilitation agencies. Personnel are most responsive to influence based on technical competence (expert power), the legitimacy of a supervisor's position (legitimate power), and their liking for or identification with a supervisor (referent power), in that order.

Table 2

Bases of Supervisor Influence[a]

Source of Influence	Mean Rating (Range 1-6)
Expert Power	4.65
Legitimate Power	4.23
Referent Power	3.92
Reward Power	3.44
Coercive Power	3.22

[a]A higher mean rating indicates greater strength as a source of influence. Means are based upon responses of 1,662 personnel.

IMPLICATIONS

What emerges from these results is a broadened concept of the role of supervision in social welfare and rehabilitation agencies. To be fully effective, the supervisor must view himself not solely as a boss—one who plans, organizes, controls, and reviews—or as a

trainer, or both, but also as a resource to his subordinates, an expert in communication, a catalyst to his work group, and a representative of the group to higher agency levels. His major functions will be facilitating as well as directing, maintaining a healthy flow of communication, and relating effectively to subordinates as well as to his operational duties. These functions will be performed with a leadership style that is nondirective and nonpaternalistic, so as to engender both a healthy security and optimum independence among subordinates.

Leadership Functions

The substance of the results of the study is that supervision and leadership are not the same and that supervision becomes effective only when good leadership practices are superimposed upon the administrative techniques dictated by the kinds of jobs, caliber of personnel, and work methods characteristic of the agency mission or task. The supervisory functions found to be related to employee satisfaction and performance and to agency performance constitute an integrated approach to the creation of conditions in which the capabilities and motivation of workers may be more fully realized.

Provision of Support. In general, anything that contributes to insecurity or feelings of being threatened will tend to reduce the effectiveness of subordinates. If, in contacts with personnel, a supervisor communicates attitudes of distrust, hostility, or lack of confidence, influence attempts will be less effective because the subordinates will be too busy protecting themselves. A sense of personal worth rests on a base of personal security, and, when individuals are responsible and capable, it also requires they be given the opportunity to participate in the solution of meaningful and worthwhile problems, to discuss decisions which may affect them, and to assume responsibility when they are ready for it, with the full backing and support of their supervisor. Supervisors who provide such opportunities and support will have personnel who display greater motivation, higher morale, and greater involvement with the work and with the agency.

Work Group Maintenance. Probably the greatest barriers to effective performance in problem-solving jobs, such as social welfare and rehabilitation work, are the interpersonal-emotional relationships of people who feel threatened in some way by other people they dislike or do not understand. Pleasant relationships within a group reduce threat and permit members to shift their attention from interpersonal problems to work goals.

The way in which a work group is supervised is an important determinant of the relationships that develop within it. For example, a group in which contacts between members are restricted is not likely to become very cohesive. Similarly, when a group is led so that some of its members are "communicationally peripheral" to others, these individuals are likely to become frustrated and unproductive.

An effective supervisor organizes the work so that the fact of a common task to accomplish gives his personnel valid reasons for interacting. He coordinates activities in such a way that his personnel have adequate opportunities to consult on problems, and he insures participation in a wide range of assignments so that all members get a chance to know each other closely. He is alert for conflicts that might arise between members and he takes early action to prevent their interference with the work of the group.

Goal Facilitation. One of the most consistent findings in leadership research is that the effective leader emphasizes goals and goal accomplishment rather than becoming immersed in the minute details of ongoing tasks. The results of this study indicate that this is especially true in social welfare and rehabilitation work. The desired caliber of performance is high and involves intellectual more than physical behavior. A supervisor wants his personnel to make good decisions, to solve problems, to interact with clients effectively, and to display initiative. What is more, most of this performance must occur when he is not present to guide it. Therefore, instead of becoming deeply involved in the

details of task accomplishment, a supervisor must continually provide subordinates with performance goals to which they will be committed and performance standards which clearly specify his expectations. Best results can be obtained by actively promoting excellence through continual stress upon high performance and upon the achievement of both individual and group goals. Any action that excites enthusiasm for meeting both individual and group goals and for achieving excellence in performance is part of the goal facilitation function.

Work Facilitation. There can be little doubt that subordinates value a supervisor who helps them accomplish work objectives. In addition to directing activities, an effective supervisor also contributes to the effectiveness of his group through planning and good management and minimizes inefficiency by preventing or eliminating problems and disrupting influences within the work situation.

Much of the time of an effective supervisor is spent in planning, coordinating, scheduling, and mobilizing resources. He works on activities intended to assist the staff to move toward its objectives without lost motion and wasted effort. He must think ahead, anticipate difficulties, and take whatever actions are necessary to forestall problems. In short, an effective supervisor has a larger perspective than his subordinates and adjusts his activities to that perspective.

Representation. An important but frequently overlooked function of every supervisor is representation of his work group to higher-level personnel within his agency. Study after study[1] has shown that subordinates rate as more effective those supervisors who can adequately represent the work group in negotiations with other agency personnel, especially those at higher levels.

The extent to which a supervisor protects the interests of his work group, represents its views to higher levels, and obtains required resources exerts some powerful effects upon the performance and motivations of group members. An important determinant of a supervisor's capability for adequately performing these activities is the influence he has with his superiors. In turn, this influence is determined by his interpersonal skills, his performance record, and that of his group.

Technical Competence. Little needs to be said about this factor. Leadership is the process of influencing subordinates in order to accomplish an organization's objectives. Personnel are more likely to be influenced by a leader who makes more right decisions than by one whose decisions are mostly wrong. Furthermore, knowledge, skill, and expertise enable a supervisor to assist his subordinates in handling difficult problems. For these reasons competence in the technical aspects of the work is the base upon which all other functions must be built.

Bases of Influence

The results of this study show that social welfare and rehabilitation workers are more responsive to supervisory influence based upon expertise, legitimacy of position, and personal attraction, in that order, than upon potential rewards or coercion. The implication is that supervisors would be well advised to build their relationships with subordinates upon technical competence and interpersonal skills and to avoid manipulating them by using rewards and punishments. However, one caution is warranted. There is a fine line between the mature use of technical knowledge and a superior, all-knowing attitude. This study shows that personnel dislike such paternalistic or maternalistic behavior and that this style of leadership results in lowered satisfaction and performance.

[1] See WORKING PAPERS NO. 2. *Organizational Structure and Climate: Implications for Agencies*; National Study of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Workers, Work, and Organizational Contexts (Social and Rehabilitation Service, 1973).

Conclusion

Good supervision is an important determinant of agency effectiveness. Though the performance of supervisors varied widely among the different agencies, it was possible to identify a number of functions common to the better supervisors in the more effective agencies. These functions together constitute a meaningful model for both supervisor evaluation systems and training which, if properly used, could improve supervisory performance and, thus, the performance of both individual personnel and agencies.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ADMINISTRATION

This section shows how employee satisfaction and performance are affected by agency structure and climate. Structure has a relatively slight effect, although employees generally are more satisfied in smaller agencies. Climate, however, impacts heavily on employee behavior. Accordingly, to improve work performance, agencies should concentrate less on reorganization and more on the achievement of such climate dimensions as realistic goals, clearly understood policies, effective supervision, a minimum of administrative controls, a stable work environment, and good communication.

RESULTS

The study measured a number of different resultants, outcomes, or criterion variables, principal among which were:

- *Employee Satisfaction*—ratings by agency personnel of the extent to which they are satisfied with their work, pay, job, agency, fellow employees, potential for self-actualization, supervisor, and working conditions.
- *Employee Performance*—ratings by each individual of the quantity and quality of his own performance and by supervisors of the performance of subordinates.
- *Absenteeism*—average numbers of days and times each employee was absent in the previous 12 months.
- *Agency Performance*—ratings by agency personnel of the extent to which their agencies achieve their goals and the adequacy of their agencies' performance.

Measures of agency structure and climate were also obtained. Structure was measured in terms of the following dimensions:

- *Configuration*—the shape of the role structure of the agency in terms of lateral and vertical spans of control (number of personnel per supervisor or level respectively), number of administrative levels, and ratio of supervisors to workers.
- *Dispersion*—the number of geographically separate offices and number of detached workers.
- *Size*—the number of employees in the agency.
- *Complexity*—the extent of job and skill differentiation within the agency.
- *Concentration of Authority*—the extent to which authority for decision making is centralized within the agency.
- *Support Components*—the ratio of support personnel to service-delivery personnel.

Agency climate was evaluated in terms of the following dimensions:

- *Agency Goals*—the extent to which personnel are clear about the goals of their agencies and believe these goals are realistic.
- *Agency Policies*—the extent to which personnel are clear about the policies of their agencies.
- *Supervision*—the adequacy of supervision as perceived by agency personnel.
- *Group Relations*—the extent to which personnel perceive their work groups as possessing solidarity and emphasizing service and good professional methods.
- *Structuring of Activities*—the extent to which agencies structure and control the work activities of personnel through formalization, standardization, and impersonal controls.
- *Agency Practices*—the extent to which emphasis within an agency is upon rules and procedures as opposed to provision of service and good methods.
- *Stability of Work Environment*—the extent to which there are feelings of job security, emotional security, and a lack of turbulence within an agency.
- *Communication*—the adequacy of communication within an agency as perceived by its personnel.

Table 3 shows the relationships of agency structure and climate to satisfaction, absenteeism, and both individual and agency performance. The figures in the cells are

Table 3

Relationships of Agency Structure and Climate to Satisfaction, Performance, and Absenteeism

Dimensions of Agency Structure and Climate	Resultant[a]			
	Employee Satisfaction	Employee Performance	Absenteeism	Agency Performance
Agency Structure:				
Configuration	-.32	.20	.27	-.22
Dispersion	.32	.11	-.06	.31
Size	-.47	.11	.41	-.61
Complexity	-.17	.28	.38	-.34
Concentration of Authority	-.18	.01	-.18	-.25
Support Components	-.17	.19	-.09	-.24
Agency Climate:				
Agency Goals	.80	.31	-.34	.90
Agency Policies	.75	.25	-.31	.81
Supervision	.83	.34	-.34	.64
Group Relations	.12	-.11	-.11	-.06
Structuring of Activities	-.58	-.21	-.01	-.62
Agency Practices	-.17	-.10	-.05	.15
Stability of Work Environment	.49	.01	-.28	.64
Communication	.93	.33	-.40	.80

[a]Figures in cells are product-moment correlation coefficients.
N = 31 agencies
$p < .05 = .30$
$p < .01 = .42$

correlation coefficients which indicate the degree of relationship between two variables. Correlation coefficients range from -1.00 to 1.00. A coefficient of 1.00 indicates a perfect positive relationship, i.e., as one variable increases the other increases to the same degree. A coefficient of -1.00 indicates a perfect inverse relationship, i.e., as one variable increases the other decreases proportionately. A coefficient of .00 indicates no relationship. Thus, as a coefficient moves away from .00 and approaches 1.00 or -1.00, a stronger positive or inverse relationship is indicated.

The following may be used as a rough guide to the interpretation of both positive and negative coefficients in Table 3:

.00 to .29—no significant relationship
.30 to .40—low but significant relationship
.40 to .60—moderate relationship
.60 to 1.00—strong relationship

Employee Satisfaction

Table 3 and Figure 1 show that none of the dimensions of structure is strongly related to the satisfactions of personnel. Agency size shows a moderate inverse

Relationships of Agency Structure and Climate to Employee Satisfaction

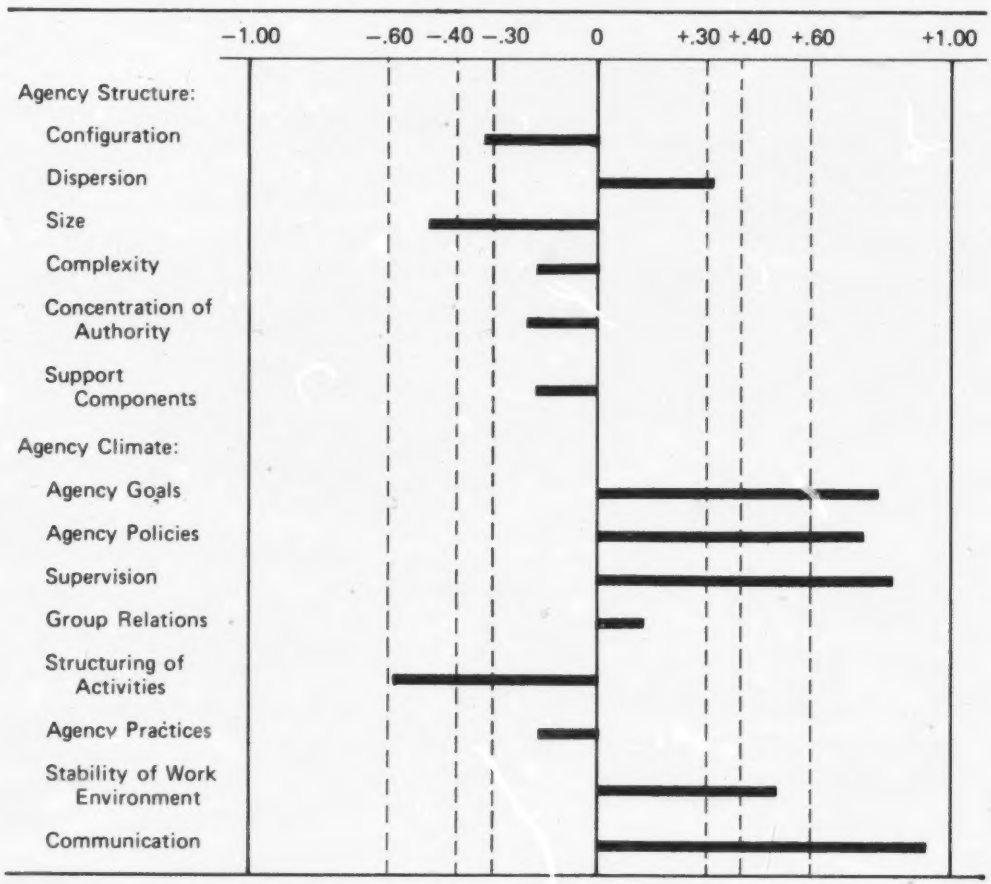

Figure 1

relationship, indicating that personnel in smaller agencies are more satisfied than those in larger ones. Similarly, a modest inverse relationship for configuration suggests that personnel in agencies with more levels and larger spans of control (number of workers per supervisor) are less satisfied. Dispersion shows a modest positive relationship with satisfaction. Configuration is highly correlated with agency size. Therefore, it is concluded that personnel are more satisfied in smaller agencies than in larger ones and that the way the agency is organized exerts only a minimal impact upon employee satisfaction.

Agency climate, however, is an important determinant of satisfaction. A number of dimensions of climate were found to have moderate to high relationships with satisfaction. Thus, employee satisfaction increases when: goals are realistic in terms of potential for accomplishment and clearly understood; policies are clearly understood; supervision is effective; agency efforts to control and structure activities are moderated; the work environment is stable and reasonably secure; and, most important, communication within the agency is adequate and effective.

Employee Performance

Agency structure has little effect but climate exercises some impact upon employee performance through the effects of agency goals, supervision, and communication (see Figure 2). Additional data indicate that these dimensions exert their influence through their strong impacts upon role perceptions, which in turn are moderately related to performance.[1] Thus, performance is better when employees' roles are clearly understood and little conflict about them exists between supervisors and workers. In turn, roles are largely determined by the climate within an agency (.90). Thus, climate impacts upon performance indirectly through its effects upon roles.

Although not examined in this study, the portion of performance not determined by climate is probably attributable to the abilities of personnel.

Absenteeism

Table 3 and Figure 3 show that certain dimensions of both structure and climate are moderately related to absenteeism. Together, structure and climate correlate at .51 with it. They account for approximately 25 percent of absenteeism, exerting a moderate influence upon it.

Absenteeism is influenced by the size of an agency and its complexity. Absence rates are greater in larger, more complex agencies, and in those with more sections or departments, a greater variety of jobs, and more different skill levels, e.g., Aides, Caseworker I, II, and III, etc. Increases in size and complexity are accompanied by increases in absence rates.

Absenteeism is inversely related to the following dimensions of climate: agency goals, agency policies, supervision, and communication. Thus, it is reduced when goals are realistic and clearly understood, policies are clearly understood, supervision is effective, and communication is effective. Although none of these factors is highly related to absenteeism, they exert a moderate direct impact when taken together.

Additional data show that climate exerts a much stronger indirect impact upon absenteeism than is indicated in Table 3. These data throw some interesting new light upon the determinants of absenteeism. In this study, it was found that absences are greater in agencies where: (1) roles are not clear or personnel experience conflict about

[1] Research Report No. 2, *Effects of Agency Work Contexts: An Intensive Field Study*, National Study of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Workers, Work, and Organizational Contexts, Vols. 1 and 2 (Social and Rehabilitation Service, 1974).

Relationships of Agency Structure and Climate to Employee Performance

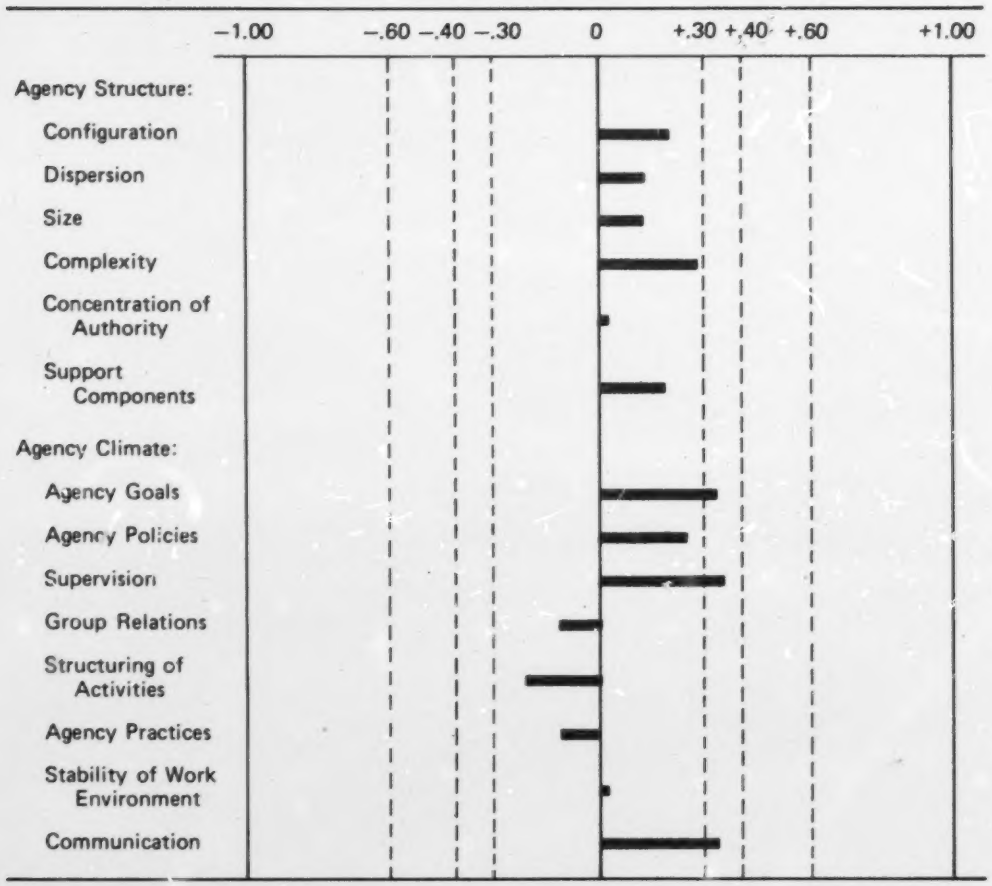

Figure 2

them; (2) norms about what constitutes good work are weak; (3) work and professional values are low; (4) personnel do not place much importance upon significant aspects of the work environment; (5) personnel do not like their jobs or their agencies; and (6) personnel do not feel involved with their jobs and their agency. The important finding, however, is that although climate is only moderately related to absenteeism in a direct fashion, it is very strongly related to these factors.

Therefore, it is concluded that climate impacts strongly upon the perceptions, attitudes, and values of personnel, especially in the areas discussed above, and that these factors in turn impact moderately upon absenteeism.

Agency Performance

Table 3 and Figure 4 show that the performance of an agency as evaluated by its personnel is influenced by its size and complexity. Larger size is accompanied by reduced

Relationships of Agency Structure and Climate to Absenteeism

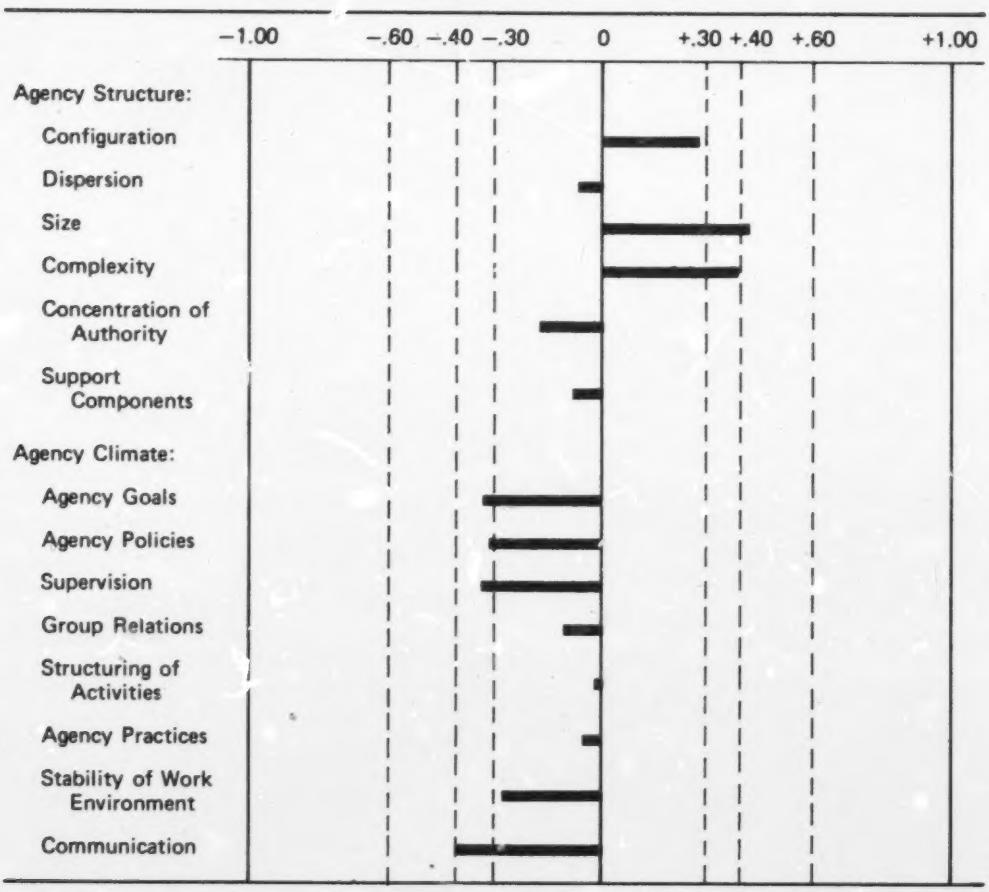

Figure 3

effectiveness and more complex structures are accompanied by somewhat decreased performance. Thus, the structure of an agency exerts a small influence upon its performance, principally because of size.

Climate exerts a very strong impact upon agency performance. Those dimensions that exercise the greatest influence are goals, policies, supervision, structuring of activities (inverse relationship), stability of work environment, and communication. All of these have strong relationships with agency performance and can be considered as major determinants.

Relation of Structure and Climate

One relationship which has not been examined is that between structure and climate. It seems reasonable to suspect that structure must have some impact upon climate and it is important to know what that impact might be.

Relationships of Agency Structure and Climate to Agency Performance

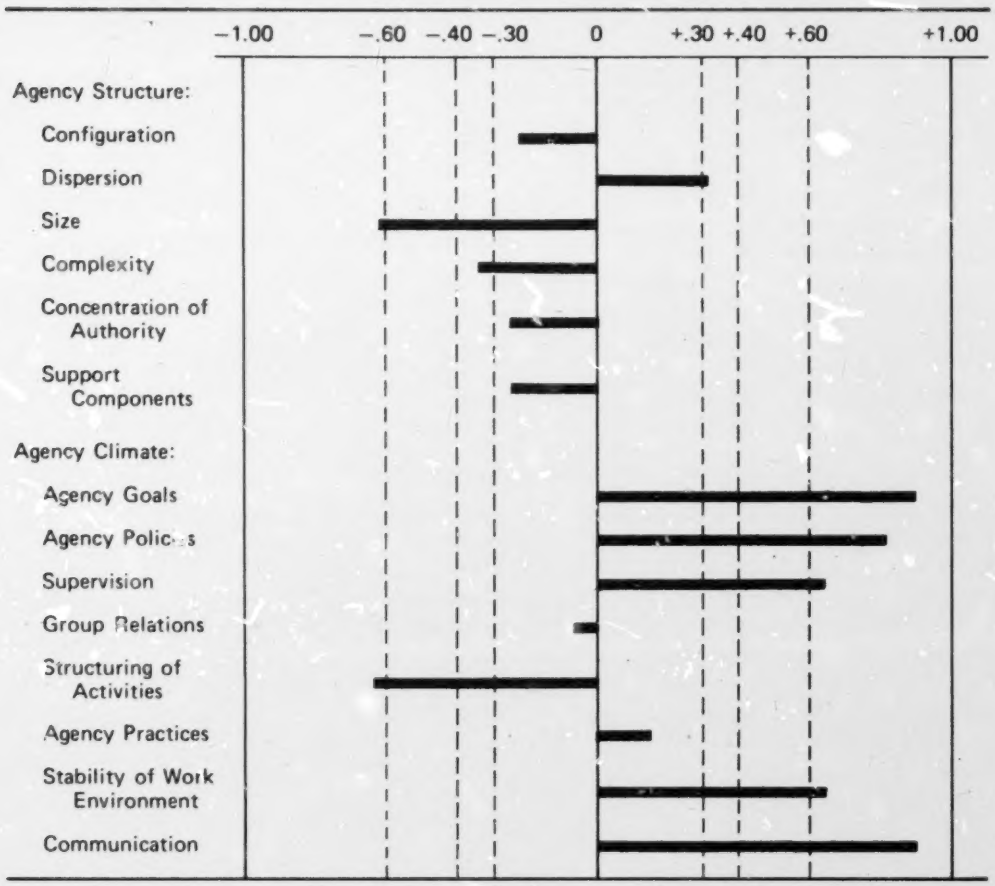

Figure 4

Through the use of multiple correlational procedures it was determined that the combined dimensions of structure account for approximately 56 percent (R = .75) of climate, of which dispersion contributes 27 percent, size contributes 17 percent, and configuration contributes 10 percent. This means that agencies which are more dispersed have more favorable climates, and larger agencies in general have less favorable climates. Similarly, as agency configuration becomes taller (more levels) and as spans of control (ratio of personnel to supervisors) become larger, the favorableness of climate is usually reduced.

It can be concluded that, in general, climate is affected by structure. The qualifier "in general" is inserted because exceptions were found in this study. Climate does not necessarily have to be negatively impacted by agency size. It is possible for a large agency to possess a highly favorable climate. However, the implication of the data is that large size makes a favorable climate more difficult to maintain and large agencies must make greater efforts than small ones to achieve the same level of climate. However, no agency is immune from a bad climate merely because it is small, and, conversely, it is entirely

possible for a large agency to develop a highly favorable climate when managers work at it. The reason is that other factors also influence climate. In this study it was found that agency goals, supervision, and communication impact upon other climate variables, thus influencing the overall climate effect. Effective goals, supervision, and communication can overcome any negative impacts exerted by large size and taller structures.

IMPLICATIONS

The results of the study clearly indicate that the climate of an agency exerts a major impact upon work and work performance in social welfare and rehabilitation agencies. In fact, it may be a more potent factor in these agencies than in conventional commercial or industrial organizations. Because of the nature of the work and the necessary relationships among personnel, climate plays an important role in determining the satisfactions and effectiveness of social welfare and rehabilitation personnel.

The impact of agency structure is more complex. Though it was not directly related to most of the criteria in any large degree, its dimensions, in combination, were highly related to climate. The conclusion is that structure impacts upon work and work performance indirectly through its effects upon climate.

Although the most common response to a perceived need for improvement within an agency is to change some aspect of structure, structural changes are not likely to have as immediate or as lasting effects as modifications in climate and will be ineffective unless the climate is already favorable or is changed to become so. In short, reorganization will not help if climate is poor, but actions to change climate will obtain desired results if they are carefully planned and effectively implemented.

The various impacting factors are differentially related to satisfaction and performance. They are listed below in the order of attention they should be given by agency managements and administrators in planning and executing efforts to upgrade agency effectiveness. Standards for determining priorities were: (1) the number of criterion variables affected, with a required minimum of at least two; and (2) the relative sizes of relationships to criterion variables.

The recommended order of priorities is:

- Agency Goals
- Agency Policies
- Communication
- Supervision
- Structuring of Activities
- Stability of Work Environment
- Size of Agency
- Dispersion of Agency

Agency Goals

The highest priority is assigned to agency goals. The necessity for careful formulation and assignment of goals has long been a fundamental aspect of organizational doctrine. Now it is apparent that goals can be critically important in the administration of social welfare and rehabilitation agencies.

Many agencies have formulated broad purposes and called them goals. However, as effective tools of administration, goals must be more than mere broad purposes set down on paper primarily for public consumption. Effective goals are specific objectives. They state the results to be attained through performance, designate the actual ends to be sought through the operating decisions of the agency, and tell specifically what the

organization hopes to accomplish, usually within a specified period. When personnel are committed to them and understand them and their implications for action, such goals possess motivational properties and also serve as targets to which efforts can be directed.

From the study it can be concluded that agency goals should be: (1) realistic and feasible; (2) relevant for the stated mission or purpose of the agency; (3) clearly stated in terms which indicate the activities required for goal accomplishment; and (4) widely and fully communicated so that all agency personnel clearly understand them and each individual understands their implications for his own job.

These criteria suggest the necessity for two broad activities: (1) careful development and clear enunciation of workable agency and work group goals by agency administrators; and (2) an intensive and continuing campaign of communication designed to insure that all personnel clearly understand the goals and their relevance. The communication campaign should include both official agency communiques emanating from top levels and more intensive personal communication which starts at the top and moves down through the chain of authority to the lowest level. In this way goals can become a pervasive aspect of agency life and serve as genuine standards against which contemplated or accomplished actions can be evaluated.

Agency Policies

Policies are statements of intent designed to provide broad guidance to personnel in the resolution of unanticipated problems. They are not to be confused with rules or procedures, which provide guidance for coping with routine problems or tasks. Rules and procedures usually are developed to codify ways of implementing policies.

The study shows that the clear understanding of agency policies was highly related to several of the criterion variables. The data also showed that many personnel were at least somewhat unclear about many policies of their agency.

Clear understanding of policies is important to both the attitudes of personnel and their performance. If workers do not clearly understand policies, mistakes are likely or much time and effort are wasted in obtaining interpretations which would be unnecessary if everyone had the same correct understanding. In addition, confusion about policies often leads to frustration and in turn to negative attitudes that may infect all of the work in the entire agency.

As with goals, the clear understanding of policies requires two broad activities. The first involves examination of all policies to ensure that they are clear, uncontradictory, and appropriate. The second activity is communication of policies to all personnel, which can be accomplished most effectively through training or information sessions in which policies are reviewed and discussed. Policy administration can be fully effective only when periodic reviews are accomplished to ensure that policies are current and that all personnel remain up-to-date in their understanding of them.

Communication

Communication is probably the most critical aspect in any organization because everything else depends upon it. It both determines and is determined by all other climate factors and impacts significantly upon most of the criterion variables. People need information in order to perform their jobs properly. Equally important, the lack of information breeds frustration which can affect every aspect of agency operations.

The biggest problem, confirmed in this study, is that higher levels in an organization usually assume communication is adequate but lower-level personnel do not agree. The great majority of personnel feel they do not have all the information they need to do their jobs effectively. To be sure, the adequacy of communication is a relative matter depending upon the perspective from which it is viewed. However, from the standpoint

of the detrimental effects upon personnel relations and performance effectiveness, if employees feel they do not have sufficient information, then they do not.

The development of effective communication throughout an agency is extremely complex. An administrator may mount formal communication campaigns which may help to overcome some information deficiencies. However, the best communication occurs on a daily basis through the chain of authority, with every level making conscious efforts to ensure that blockages do not arise. For this an administrator must: (1) publicly establish as a basic premise that communication is the direct responsibility of every level in his agency; (2) make sure that supervisory personnel are well trained in the fundamentals of good communication; (3) emphasize the importance of communication in all of his contacts with all personnel; and (4) make sure that subordinate supervisory personnel do the same.

Supervision

So far the discussion about supervision has merely shown that it is an important determinant of several criterion factors, but has said nothing about the nature of that supervision nor the elements it comprises. The measures of supervision used in the study were based on recent findings about effective and ineffective supervision in a variety of organizations and were designed to ascertain the extent to which certain leadership activities were performed by supervisors in social welfare and rehabilitation organizations.

The data are conclusive. High agency scores on the supervision variable were accompanied by greater employee satisfaction, better individual performance, less absenteeism, and better agency performance. Supervision was indeed a determinant of several of the criterion variables.

The type of supervisory behavior that enhances the criterion factors involves effective performance in specified areas of activity: (1) provision of emotional and technical support to subordinates; (2) maintenance of work group solidarity and effectiveness; (3) facilitation of work group goal accomplishment; (4) facilitation of work activities; (5) technical competence; and (6) representation of work groups at higher organizational levels. In addition, effective supervision was found to be nondirective and nonpaternalistic (or nonmaternalistic). Thus, where enhancement of any of the criteria is desired, it is advisable to obtain improved supervisory performance in these areas of leadership behavior.

Improved supervisory performance is obtained principally through training, which is difficult and time-consuming and frequently can be introduced only after deep-seated resistance has been overcome. This seems to be especially true with social work personnel. For example, the research staff encountered one agency where an apparently well-conceived supervisory training program, oriented toward human relations, had to be cancelled because of strong resistance from supervisors who felt that, as social workers, they already knew all they needed to know about interpersonal relations in a work setting. Such resistance is fairly common.

Training must be well planned and well conducted to be effective. Plans and actual training based on the findings of the study should contribute significantly to improved supervisory performance.

Agency Structuring of Activities

The variable, structuring of activities, measured two things. The first was employees' perceptions of the amount of freedom they had in five areas of activity: providing services; allocating agency funds; apportioning time spent on the job; choosing work methods; and handling cases or projects. Overall, most employees felt they had a moderate amount of freedom, although this varied with the activity and the agency.

The second thing measured, using data from official agency representatives, was the amount of standardization of procedures in an agency, the extent to which rules, procedures, instructions, and communications were formalized (written), and the extent to which records on work performance were used for control purposes. When employees reported less autonomy and there was greater standardization, formalization, and impersonal control, it was concluded that the agency structured the activities of its personnel more.

The results showed that structuring of activities is inversely related in moderate degree to employee satisfaction and agency performance. When structuring of activities is high, satisfaction and agency performance, as evaluated by the personnel, are lower. When an agency structures activities less, the criterion factors are higher.

Administrators who desire to improve the satisfactions of employees as well as the performance of their agencies must recognize the fine line between the optimal use of constraints and carrying them to excess. It would not be wise to do away with standard written procedures and the use of records for control purposes and permit all personnel complete autonomy in their work activities. The results do not suggest this nor is it recommended. The issue more properly involves the excessive use of standardization, formalization, and controls to the extent that employees are frustrated and inefficiencies in work accomplishment result.

Managerial personnel sometimes lose sight of the original purpose of controls, which is to obtain coordinated and policy-consistent actions from all personnel. If they accomplish this purpose they are desirable; if they unreasonably restrict professional judgment merely for the sake of uniformity they are excessive.

Administrators interested in reducing the effects of agency structuring of activities upon employee satisfaction and agency performance must examine administrative practices to determine whether excessive and unnecessary controls do exist and how they may be reduced.

Stability of Work Environment

Turbulence in the work environment seems to be characteristic of the social welfare and rehabilitation fields, especially because of frequent changes in federal and state programs and regulations and fluctuations in funding. Such changes are difficult if not impossible to avoid; however, much can be done to implement them in a fashion that will minimize the anxieties and frustrations that might accompany them. Any anticipated change within an agency is potentially disturbing. But many anxieties and frustrations can be prevented or reduced if changes are preceded by careful planning and full communication about both their reasons and their implications.

In addition to turbulence and job security, stability also included a scale that measured emotional security. This scale was concerned with the possibility of insecurity due to coercive practices within an agency. It is reassuring to note that, overall, most personnel reported a very low use of threats and coercion.

Size of Agency

An administrator can do little about the size of his agency; if the work load demands it large numbers of personnel are required. Yet, the results of the study indicate that size is relevant for a number of criterion variables, with increased size usually accompanied by degradation of the factors in question.

The only recommendation that can be offered is that administrators remain more aware of climate factors affected by size. Size engenders additional and more difficult problems that require greater attention than would be necessary in smaller agencies.

Dispersion of Agency

The geographical dispersion of agencies has only minimal direct effects upon criterion variables, but the reason for including it in a listing of recommended agency priorities is its impact upon agency climate. Agency structure contributes heavily to climate, and among the dimensions of structure dispersion is the largest contributor along with size. Agencies which are more widely dispersed also possess more favorable climates.

The probable reason for favorable climates in more dispersed agencies is that dispersion tends to offset some of the detrimental effects of size. Through segmentation dispersion creates smaller subagencies and restores some of the favorable climate effects. This benefit is an additional justification of the usual reason for dispersion, namely, to get officers into areas where closer contacts can be established with potential clients.

The implication for administrators is that one way of improving agency climates and, hence, of enhancing such factors as satisfaction, performance, and reduced absenteeism may be to avoid concentrating personnel in large centralized locations and to create smaller offices dispersed throughout a service area.

Use of Priorities

The priorities presented in this report are only recommended guides for action based on relative contributions to the criterion variables. They should be adapted to local conditions and requirements, preferably after both determinants and resultants within an agency have been evaluated, so that informed decisions can be made concerning areas in which actions should be taken. Surveys of the sort conducted for this study are ideal for such evaluations, in the absence of which the priorities recommended here have the greatest likelihood of achieving the desired results.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

In this section, employee evaluations of their work and their agencies are compared according to the employees' age, education, and job class. In general, young, better educated, professional personnel are the least satisfied with their pay, job assignment, and working conditions. Other employees rate these factors more favorably. This indicates the fallacy, common in some agencies, of polling only older, experienced workers for their view of conditions. To achieve agency goals, management should conduct continuing, long-range efforts aimed at improving the work context for personnel at all levels.

RESULTS

Respondents evaluated many different aspects of their work and their agencies. These evaluations were compiled and analyzed in a number of ways, one of which involved comparisons according to certain characteristics of the personnel. The greatest and most consistent differences among these characteristics were found for age, education, and job class.

This summary report presents data on employee satisfaction with eight of the many aspects of their work and their agencies which they evaluated. These results are presented because: (1) knowledge about employee satisfaction is especially important for effective management of agencies; and (2) the differences for age, education, and job class with respect to satisfactions are typical of those found consistently for all perceptions, attitudes, and values of social welfare and rehabilitation personnel.

Measures of employee satisfaction were obtained by requesting questionnaire respondents to indicate their feelings about each of the following:

- "the kind of work which you do, e.g., child welfare, public welfare, rehabilitation, family services, etc." (Satisfaction With the Work).
- "the pay which you receive" (Satisfaction With the Pay).
- "your specific job assignment" (Satisfaction With the Job).
- "your agency in general" (Satisfaction With the Agency).
- "your fellow workers" (Satisfaction With Fellow Workers).
- "the potential for personal growth and achievement which your job offers" (Satisfaction With Self-Actualization).
- "your supervisor" (Satisfaction With the Supervisor).
- "working conditions in your agency" (Satisfaction With Working Conditions).

Respondents rated each factor by selecting the alternative most closely describing their attitude on the following scale:

Very Satisfied (6)
Quite Satisfied (5)
Fairly Satisfied (4)
A Little Dissatisfied (3)
Quite Dissatisfied (2)
Very Dissatisfied (1)

Numbers in parentheses following the alternatives are the values assigned to them for analytical purposes.

Table 4 shows mean ratings for the eight satisfaction factors according to age, education, and job class. Overall, service-delivery personnel are most satisfied with fellow employees, the kind of work they do, their supervisors, and their specific job assignments, in that order. They are least satisfied with the potential for self-actualization, working conditions, their agency in general, and their pay, in that order. The sizable difference between the two groups of factors makes it possible to clearly identify those aspects with which a majority of personnel are dissatisfied, namely, the potential for self-actualization, working conditions, the agency in general, and pay.

However, the most useful results are the clearly discernible differences between groups classified according to age, education, and job class. Personnel under 40 uniformly reported less satisfaction than employees over 40, and for some factors personnel under 30 were significantly lower than those in the 30-39 group. The findings are especially important because personnel under 40 constitute 67.2 percent, and those under 30 43.8 percent, of the sample. Since younger personnel are a majority of the work force, their attitudes are highly significant for effective personnel management.

With respect to education, personnel with bachelor's degrees are least satisfied on all factors except pay. On many factors they are joined by those with graduate training. Individuals with the most education are the least satisfied, and since these include most professional workers, their satisfactions become highly important.

The results for job class show that professional workers are almost uniformly lower in their satisfactions than other employees. Two other findings are also of special interest. First, supervisors' ratings of satisfaction are consistently close to, although somewhat higher than, those of professional workers, suggesting a similarity of attitudes between these two groups. Second, the satisfactions of agency heads are consistently much higher than those of all other job classes. This finding is especially significant because it suggests a wide difference in perspective with important implications for the ways agencies are managed.

The findings for satisfaction are similar to those for perceptions, attitudes, and values about numerous aspects of the agencies and the work of social welfare and rehabilitation personnel. In general, most of the findings follow consistent patterns.

Table 4

Satisfactions of Agency Personnel According to Age, Education, and Job Class

Demographic Class	Satisfaction With: Work	Pay	Job	Agency	Fellow Workers	Self-Actualization	Supervisor	Working Conditions
Age								
Under 30	4.44	3.93	4.39	3.33	4.89	3.34	4.39	3.22
30-39	4.59	3.88	4.41	3.71	4.78	3.44	4.64	3.61
40-49	4.83	4.02	4.76	4.15	4.94	3.74	4.77	3.98
50-59	4.99	4.10	4.97	4.29	5.07	3.90	4.76	4.01
60+	5.31	4.72	5.20	4.52	5.09	4.36	5.07	4.30
Education								
Less Than 12 Years	4.97	4.10	5.13	5.13	5.36	4.61	5.29	4.77
High School	4.84	3.65	4.83	4.49	4.97	3.72	4.83	4.32
Some College	5.04	3.43	4.98	4.78	5.08	4.12	5.16	4.06
Bachelor's Degree	4.53	4.02	4.51	3.45	4.95	3.32	4.56	3.39
Graduate Training	4.73	4.06	4.52	3.79	4.78	3.70	4.50	3.62
Job Class								
Nonprofessional	5.11	3.44	5.18	4.84	5.25	4.18	5.15	4.60
Professional	4.52	3.97	4.48	3.55	4.90	3.39	4.53	3.44
Supervisor	4.91	4.19	4.63	3.98	4.83	3.81	4.64	3.71
Staff Administrator	5.04	4.45	4.61	3.98	4.64	4.11	4.48	3.89
Agency Head	5.38	4.63	5.63	5.13	5.25	5.29	5.33	5.00

Younger, better-educated, professional personnel uniformly take a more negative view of important elements of their work context. They are less satisfied, evaluate agency performance lower, and rate work processes within the agencies as less effective. They also indicate less clarity and more conflict about agency goals and policies, and rate communication as less adequate. All of these findings have significance because of the large numbers of young, well-educated, professional personnel who are employed in social welfare and rehabilitation agencies.

IMPLICATIONS

Although personnel management may have many purposes, a principal objective should be to create and maintain conditions conducive to effective performance both by individuals and the agency as a whole. This requires an awareness of the attitudes of agency personnel as well as of any differences that may exist among them.

The data presented in this report were concerned specifically with the satisfactions of personnel; however, they are representative of a much larger universe of perceptions, attitudes, and values related to many aspects of agency work contexts. The results are conclusive for all these aspects. Younger, college-trained, and professional personnel consistently rate important elements in their agencies less favorably than other personnel do. There is much overlap between these categories since for the most part the same

individuals appeared in all three groups. This demonstrates that what is being discussed is a large proportion of the essential personnel in most agencies.

It is imperative that their attitudes, values, and perceptions be taken into account in any consideration of ways to improve agency effectiveness. A common practice in some agencies is to informally poll older, experienced personnel for their views of conditions. The data presented here suggest that this practice can produce misleading results since older workers are in a minority and tend to view conditions more favorably. Their opinions may leave administrators with a complacency not warranted by the actual views of most workers.

The likelihood of complacency is suggested by another finding of this study. Agency heads consistently rate conditions more favorably than all other job levels and substantially more than professional workers do. If it can be assumed that both groups rated conditions as they actually believed them to be, the wide differences between them suggest that agency heads do not possess very accurate understandings of the views of their professional personnel, a group most critical to agency operations.

Accurate understandings of the views of personnel are necessary for good personnel management. Only when attitudes are known is it possible to prevent problems related to them and to plan programs that will improve conditions which impact upon motivation and performance.

All of this assumes that good personnel management must be an integral aspect of general agency administration. The successful incorporation of personnel management into administration is something desired by employees, many managements, and by society at large. Also desirable from the standpoint of an agency is to have employees who are well-motivated and generally satisfied with the organization.

A well-motivated and satisfied work force is achieved through carefully planned efforts to create conditions conducive to effective performance and to remove problems or issues that may give rise to discontent. Ways of creating such conditions were discussed in the preceding section, "implications for administration."

The results of this study relating to the satisfaction of personnel suggest that the importance of the work context cannot be denied. The environment within which people work is probably the single most critical determinant of their attitudes and, therefore, of their motivations. The success of any agency requires the collective efforts of numbers of people. Collective behavior is effective only to the extent that all personnel at all levels make useful contributions to the agency's goals. They must know what actions are required of them, be capable of performing these actions, and be motivated to perform them well. People must also learn habits of working together, and the agency as a whole must develop effective routines of functioning.

The principal instruments for bringing about these conditions are:

- Factors which enhance proficiency:
  - effective structure and job design;
  - efficient procedures and practices;
  - excellent training for both workers and administrators;
  - communication practices that supply each individual with information and knowledge necessary for intelligent performance of duties.
- Factors which promote a common desire to belong to the agency and identify with it:
  - good administrative, supervisory, and leadership practices at all levels;
  - good working conditions and good equipment;
  - opportunity for each individual to perform as a conscious member of a larger whole;
  - means of providing occasional, explicit acknowledgement of agency progress to all members and of recognizing the shared responsibility for such progress;

- opportunities for personnel to influence decisions about matters that affect them.

- Factors which enhance motivation:
  - a system which makes careful provision for incentive, reward, and approval of good work;
  - procedures that make information about individual and work group progress available to personnel;
  - opportunities for individuals and groups to experience success in the performance of tasks;
  - opportunities for challenge and growth for each individual;
  - opportunities for optimum independence in the performance of work.

It is the function of personnel management to devise an integrated program in which each of these factors is developed to an optimum level and a formal system is set up for monitoring them on a continuing basis. Although certain corrective actions can be successful as emergency measures, they are unlikely to have much lasting effect. A sound and constructive work context is usually the result of careful and calculated developmental efforts by an enlightened administration over a considerable period of time.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TRAINING

A sizable proportion of agency personnel reported difficulty in performing common job functions and understanding how agency goals and policies relate to job performance. Over one-third stated that their on-the-job training was inadequate. This indicates that poor performance by qualified personnel could be improved by an effective training program. Such a program should emphasize agency goals and policies, problem-focused training (to reduce the high costs of trial-and-error performance), refresher courses, and supervisor training.

RESULTS

Among the many elements that influence the ultimate results achieved by social welfare and rehabilitation agencies two in particular are fundamental. The first concerns the competence with which agency personnel perform the essential functions of their work. Inadequate performance will be reflected in the results achieved. The second element concerns the extent to which personnel understand the goals and policies of their agencies and how these relate to the performance of functions common to their jobs. Ability to relate goals and policies to daily activities and competence in the execution of such activities are fundamental to effective performance.

In the study agency personnel rated the amount of difficulty they usually encountered in performing a number of functions common to social welfare and rehabilitation work, and the extent to which they were clear about agency goals and policies and how these related to their jobs. Table 5 shows results for difficulty in performing common job functions and Table 6 presents results concerning goal and policy clarity.

Over 50 percent of agency personnel reported that performance of each of the listed functions in Table 5 was not very difficult or not difficult at all. However, for this report the more significant responses were from those who did indicate some degree of difficulty. Depending upon the function, from 20 to 48 percent of all personnel were among these. Surprisingly, the fewest number of workers (20 percent) reported difficulty

Table 5

Reported Difficulty in Performing Common Functions

Item	Percent Responding:				
	Not Difficult At All	Not Very Difficult	Somewhat Difficult	Difficult	Extremely Difficult
Referring clients to other agencies and coordinating the services of your agency with the services of other agencies.	19	38	28	11	4
Maintaining up-to-date case records.	19	36	24	14	7
Maintaining other records such as number of contacts, miles traveled, personal visits to homes, use of time, etc.	32	38	17	10	3
Client processing—this includes interviewing clients and determining if a problem exists.	30	51	15	4	1
Developing treatment plans for clients or developing case strategies.	14	45	30	8	3
Delivery of services or arranging for delivery of services, to include management of services and budgeting where applicable.	12	40	32	12	4

Table 6

Reported Understanding of Goals and Policies

Item	Percent Responding:				
	Very Clear	Clear	Fairly Clear	Not Very Clear	Not Clear At All
How clear are you about the goals of your agency?	16	31	28	18	6
How clear are you about how agency goals apply to your job?	16	34	30	16	4
How clear are you about the goals of your work group?	21	41	28	8	2
How clear are you about how work group goals relate to your job?	17	16	31	11	2
How clear are you concerning the policies of the agency?	13	34	35	15	3
How clear are you about how agency policies relate to your work?	16	36	33	13	3

in client processing. The greatest number (48 percent) reported some degree of difficulty in delivering or arranging for delivery of services.

The significance of the results in Table 5 is that a sizable proportion of personnel have difficulty in performing most of the functions common to social welfare and rehabilitation work. This fact has important implications for agency accomplishment. Even if only 25 percent of employees within an agency encounter difficulty, this means that one-fourth of the personnel are probably not performing to their fullest capabilities.

Table 6 shows results concerned with clarity of goals and policies and their relationship to job performance. Again, a sizable proportion of personnel report some lack of clarity and, if the "fairly clear" category can be taken to connote some degree of doubt, a very large number of service-delivery personnel do not fully understand goals, policies, and how they relate to the performance of their own jobs.

Since many agency personnel encounter difficulty in performing the common functions of their jobs and in using goal and policy guidance in such performance, it is reasonable to conclude that these problems impact upon performance and probably result in reduced capabilities for performing well.

If personnel possess the necessary abilities, inadequate performance usually results from inadequate training. To investigate this possibility interviewers asked respondents, "Do you feel that the training you received was adequate?" Nearly two-thirds (62.5 percent) of those interviewed answered that it was.

Those who said it was not (37.5 percent) were asked why this was so. Following is a sampling of responses they gave:

"I had to rely mostly on guidance from fellow workers. I had little formal orientation and my supervisor was burdened down with paperwork and administrative requirements" (Public Welfare).

"Training was adequate for doing the administrative paperwork but not for doing the actual work" (Public Welfare).

"My training was not oriented toward services. I would welcome more periodic training" (Public Welfare).

"Agency policy should be taught more fully and there was nothing about case work" (Public Welfare).

"Too much time was spent in lectures that were not practical" (Public Welfare).

"Agency training was made quite academic. The training was not relevant; it just didn't relate to the work at all. There was no case work at all, just policies, manuals, etc." (Public Welfare).

"We had no organized program" (Public Welfare).

"Orientation training was in the state office and didn't relate to this office at all. I had a nice time meeting other social workers" (Public Welfare).

"Training did not prepare me to face the world of 120 caseloads and emergency problems on top of that" (Public Welfare).

"I didn't know how to apply the training (academic) because I had never worked with clients. I had been a supervisor for two years before I got any supervisory training" (Supervisor, Public Welfare).

"What training?" (Public Welfare).

"My academic training was in the field of social work. There is not much formal training or orientation training in this agency" (Private Welfare).

"I felt my academic training was inadequate mainly because most of the content of it was not relevant to this agency. There was also a lack of experiential training" (Private Welfare).

"This agency doesn't do training. It is necessary for people to learn the organization on their own initiative. There is no real training outline or program" (Private Welfare).

"We have inservice training that is good but it should have provided more information about community resources" (Private Welfare).

"Yes and no. Most of our people need courses in social work or psychology. Most new workers would benefit by more orientation to the agency goals and what the agency expects of workers" (Supervisor, Private Welfare).

"I would like the opportunity to attend more workshops and college courses" (Private Welfare).

"My training as a worker was adequate for casework activities. Now, as a supervisor, I haven't had any relevant training" (Supervisor, Public Welfare).

"Nothing can prepare an individual for what goes on in an agency of this size" (Supervisor, large Public Welfare agency).

"I went right into the job, no pre-service training in this agency" (Public Rehabilitation).

"College work was too academic and idealistic. The state-level orientation program was not relevant" (Public Rehabilitation).

"I was on the job nine months before I got in a training program for new counselors. Training was haphazard. I was mainly responsible for finding out on my own. It would be desirable if there were presentations by people in the community from time to time talking about job trends, resources, etc. Training needs to be more organized, less hit or miss, it should stress job placement, and services of other agencies" (Public Rehabilitation).

"The only training I had was to read the manual and find out from other counselors, if I could" (Public Rehabilitation).

IMPLICATIONS

Training differs widely among both welfare and rehabilitation agencies. In some it is quite effective, in some it is not adequate to meet workers' needs, and in some it is nonexistent. Good supervisory training is especially needed.

As indicated by the data and the comments quoted above social and rehabilitation work is difficult for new employees, who face a long and often arduous period when they must learn solely through trial and error on the job. Aside from the possible damage to potentially effective personnel, long and mistake-ridden periods of on-the-job learning are extremely costly to agencies. Every employee who cannot perform at peak proficiency as early in his employment as possible adds costs to an agency because the work force must be larger to compensate for ineffective personnel. In addition, there is much evidence that where training is poor or nonexistent increased numbers of resignations occur among recently employed personnel. Every resignation increases costs for which little return has been obtained. For these reasons effective training is both desirable and essential for efficient agency operations.

Effective training is mainly a matter of administrative emphasis, coupled with careful determination of objectives, detailed planning of activities and content to meet the objectives, and capable and motivated instructors. The interest and commitment of both administrators and the personnel responsible for conducting training will determine how effective it will be.

The results of the study indicate some areas to which training should be directed. First is a thorough orientation course to provide full information and discussion of agency goals, organization, and policies, together with an explanation of pertinent laws and regulations that will govern decisions made in the course of daily work. This type of knowledge is sufficiently critical to warrant training, testing, and retraining of new workers until they have reached the levels of proficiency required to start work on their jobs.

Second is a high-priority requirement for problem-focused training concerned with the delivery of services. Many workers commented they were not trained to face the real-life problems they encountered after starting work. Such training is difficult but not impossible to conduct effectively and can be a most productive experience for new workers.

Third are periodic refresher courses or workshops, dealing with specific problems or new techniques, that are required to bring experienced personnel up-to-date and broaden the perspectives of newer workers.

Finally there appears to be a most pressing need for supervisory training. The function of supervision is too critical to leave to trial-and-error learning. Systematic instruction in the fundamentals of supervision warrants a high place on any list of training requirements. Another report in this series which discusses such implications for supervision provides guidance concerning supervisory functions around which training can be developed.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

This section shows how employees rated their organizations' competence (which refers to the capacity to adapt internal operating processes to the requirements of changing environments). With this capacity, an agency can acquire the information it needs to evaluate internal conditions accurately, make informed decisions, and execute programs effectively. Evaluation results showed that a gap exists between agency emphasis on certain activities and its effectiveness in performing them. Since organizations are most effectively changed from within, the organizational development concept—which calls for the members themselves to examine processes and modify them to improve the overall system—would appear to be the best method of improving social welfare and rehabilitation agencies.

RESULTS

Organizational competence refers to the capacity of an organization for adapting its internal operating processes to the requirements of changing environments and for coping with such requirements rapidly, accurately, and appropriately. Critical to competence are seven processes which in other contexts have been found to be highly related to organizational effectiveness:

- *Sensing*—acquiring accurate and complete information about both the external and internal environments of an agency that are critical for its effectiveness and survival.
- *Communication*—communicating information that is sensed to those who must make decisions or act upon it.
- *Decision Making*—deciding upon appropriate courses of action for an agency.
- *Stabilizing*—maintaining stability and reducing turbulence that might result from decisions and actions taken to cope with environmental demands.
- *Communicating Implementation*—communicating implementation requirements to those who must execute decisions that have been made.
- *Coping Actions*—executing actions resulting from decisions.
- *Feedback*—acquiring information about and evaluating the effectiveness of actions.

Both competence and its constituent processes have proven to be highly related to effectiveness. Through these processes it is possible to obtain measures of specific effectiveness-related activities performed to some degree in all agencies.

Data on competence included ratings by personnel concerning: (1) their agencies' effectiveness in performing each process; and (2) the emphasis their agencies placed upon effective performance of each process. It was anticipated that emphasis and effectiveness would be related, that is, if an agency emphasized a particular process effectiveness for that process would be higher, if effectiveness were low it would probably be because the process did not receive much emphasis in the agency.

Each process was clearly defined in the questionnaire. Respondents rated the effectiveness of agency performance according to this scale:

5	4	3	2	1
Extremely Effective	Very Effective	Effective	Not Very Effective	Not Effective At All

and the amount of emphasis according to this scale:

5	4	3	2	1
Extreme Emphasis	Much Emphasis	Some Emphasis	Little Emphasis	No Emphasis

The numbers above the alternatives were the values used in computing scores for the items.

Table 7 shows rated effectiveness and emphasis by agency type for each of the seven processes and reveals several uniform patterns. (See also Figures 5, 6, 7, 8.) For example, for all scales the scores for private welfare agencies were the highest, rehabilitation agencies followed, and public welfare agencies were the lowest. The relative sizes of scores followed the same pattern for all agency types. Thus, the order from highest to lowest for both effectiveness and emphasis was:

- Coping Actions
- Sensing
- Decision Making
- Communicating Implementation
- Communication
- Stabilizing
- Feedback

Scores were not extremely high for any process. Emphasis scores were always higher than their associated effectiveness scores, indicating that personnel perceived that effectiveness did not reach the level of emphasis placed upon the activities. However, differences between effectiveness and emphasis scores varied among agency types.

Overall, the data show the relative emphasis placed upon the various processes. Less emphasis and hence less effectiveness occurs for communication of both information and implementation than for coping actions, sensing, and decision making. It is interesting to note that data from other studies[1] have shown that of all the processes communication of information is the most highly correlated with effectiveness. The finding in the present study that communication was a major determinant of agency performance suggests the need for greater emphasis upon the process in social welfare and rehabilitation agencies.

[1] See WORKING PAPERS NO. 2. *Organizational Structure and Climate: Implications for Agencies;* National Study of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Workers, Work, and Organizational Contexts (Social and Rehabilitation Service, 1973).

Table 7

Effectiveness and Emphasis of Agency Processes

Scale[a]	Public Welfare		Private Welfare		Public Rehabilitation		All Agencies	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Sensing Effectiveness	2.89	.63	3.59	.69	3.37	.63	3.07	.69
Sensing Emphasis	3.31	.83	3.81	.73	3.64	.69	3.43	.69
Communication Effectiveness	2.65	.83	3.41	.85	3.27	.84	2.86	.89
Communication Emphasis	3.04	.84	3.60	.78	3.38	.78	3.17	.85
Feedback Effectiveness	2.36	.82	3.22	.84	3.02	.91	2.58	.91
Feedback Emphasis	2.65	.92	3.55	.84	3.19	.89	2.86	.97
Decision-Making Effectiveness	2.76	.77	3.50	.82	3.28	.76	2.95	.83
Decision-Making Emphasis	3.33	.86	4.01	.72	3.76	.72	3.49	.86
Communicating Implementation Effectiveness	2.75	.83	3.44	.86	3.31	.79	2.94	.88
Communicating Implementation Emphasis	3.29	.79	3.64	.76	3.57	.71	3.39	.79
Coping Action Effectiveness	2.91	.74	3.67	.73	3.46	.75	3.11	.79
Coping Action Emphasis	3.36	.79	3.94	.67	3.69	.70	3.49	.79
Stabilizing Effectiveness	2.43	.83	3.26	.83	3.09	.79	2.65	.89
Stabilizing Emphasis	2.77	.93	3.64	.81	3.34	.81	2.99	.96

[a]Range for all scales is 1 to 5.

Feedback received the lowest emphasis and effectiveness ratings. Yet improved effectiveness depends upon the extent of information an organization obtains about the success of its activities so that it can learn where failures have occurred or mistakes have been made. Feedback permits organizational learning and the avoidance of repetitive mistakes.

The data presented here compare the relative effectiveness of the various processes and the emphases placed upon them, and indicate where adjustments in emphases may need to be made.

Correlation analyses revealed that agency structure is not related to competence in any significant degree but that agency climate is a major determinant ($r = .86$), accounting for 73.5 percent of the variance in competence. When climate is highly favorable the competence of agencies is also high. Since competence is highly related to the effectiveness of organizations, the enhancement of climate can be expected to enhance effectiveness through its strong impact upon competence. The elements that climate comprises are discussed under "Implications for Administration."

IMPLICATIONS

The results for organizational competence provide some significant new understandings of the performance of social welfare and rehabilitation agencies. Competence measures are a way of evaluating agency activities and obtaining estimates of performance to determine more precisely the causes of effectiveness or the lack of it.

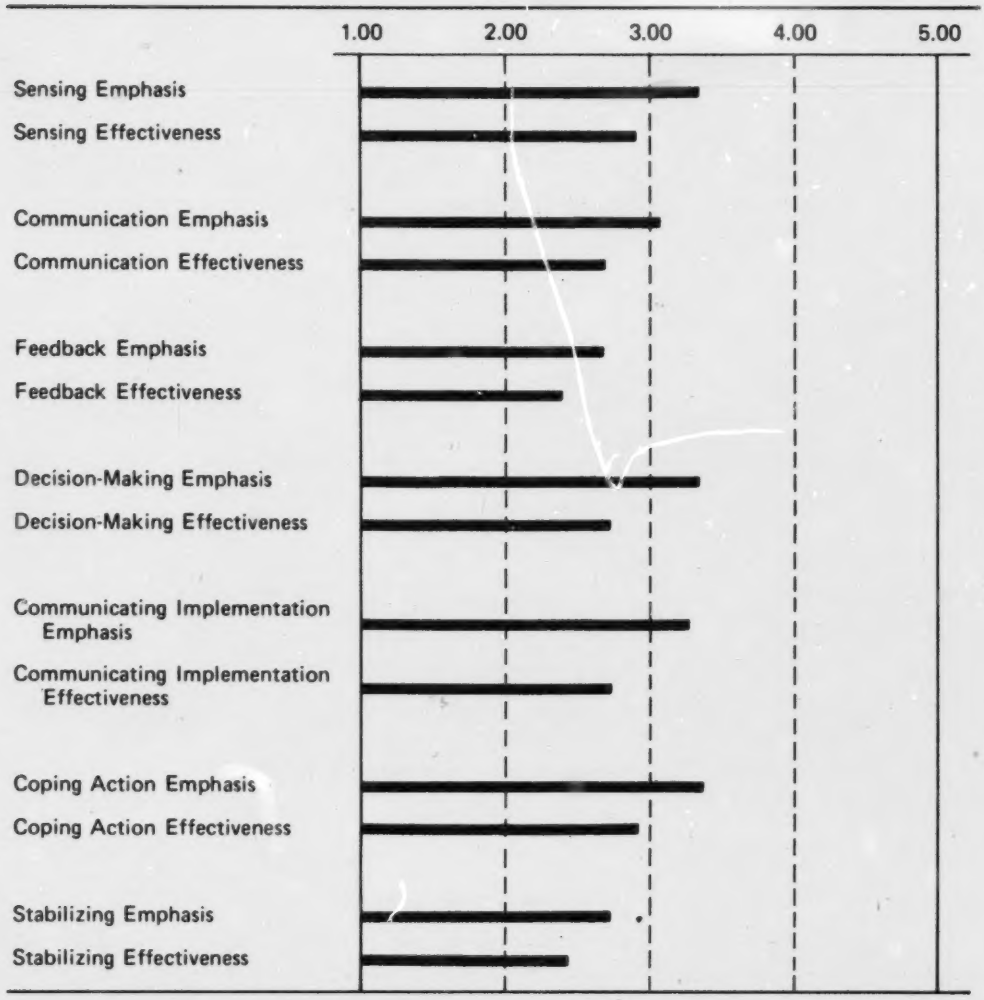

Figure 5

Competence focuses upon the internal operational processes that enable agencies to react effectively to requirements placed upon them by external sources critical for them. Such sources may be governmental agencies, boards, citizens' groups, clients, unions, or any other element important to the functioning and survival of the agency. When the processes of competence function well, an agency acquires the information it needs to make accurate evaluations of conditions within its environments, processes the information so that informed decisions can be made, makes decisions rationally, and executes the resulting programs and actions effectively and efficiently. When the processes do not function well, agency responses are frequently ineffective, inefficient, and inappropriate.

Agency Emphasis on and Effectiveness of Processes
Private Welfare Agencies

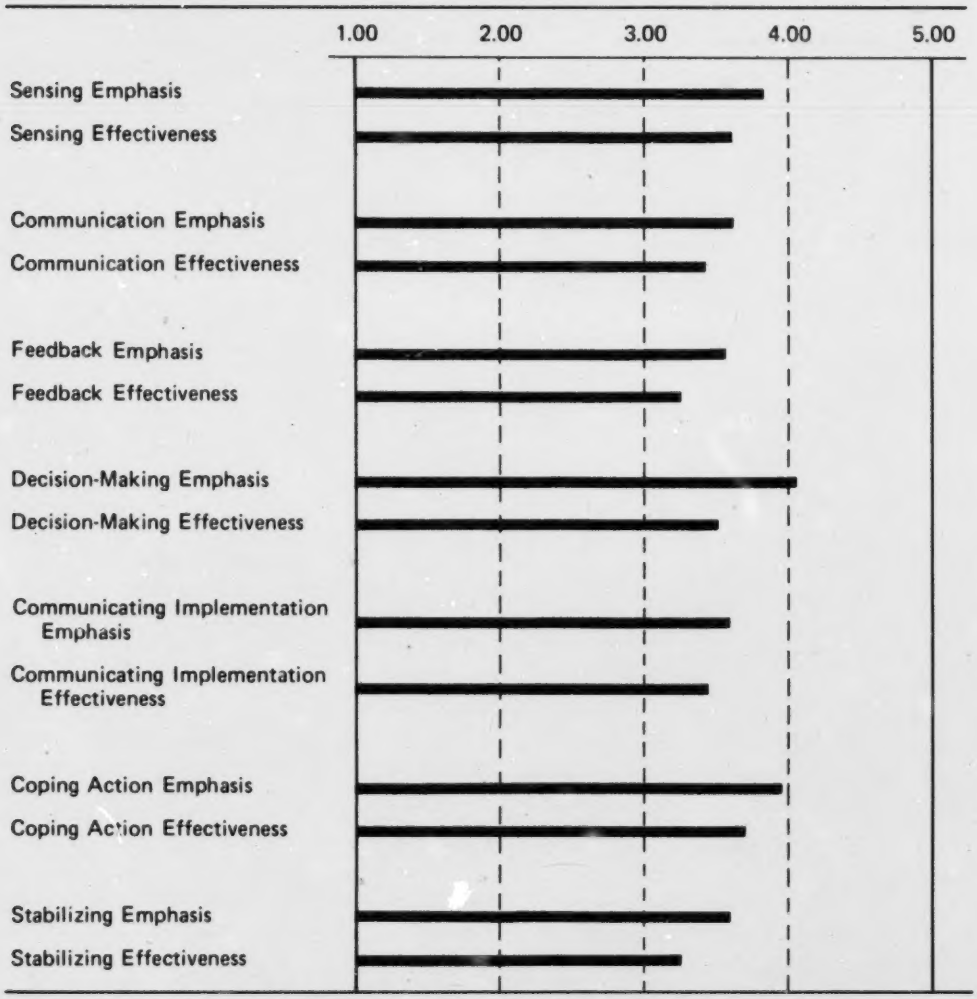

Figure 6

The data presented here have demonstrated that the climate within an agency is a principal determinant of its organizational competence. When the climate factors are favorable personnel perform the required organizational processes well, because a favorable climate produces a work force at all levels who know the requirements of their jobs in relation to goals and policies, possess the information necessary to make intelligent and appropriate decisions and to perform their duties in accordance with such decisions, and possess both the skills and the motivation to coordinate their activities for the best interests of the agency.

Thus, organizational competence determines the flexibility and responsiveness of an agency. High-quality performance of the competence processes enables an agency to

Agency Emphasis on and Effectiveness of Processes
Public Rehabilitation Agencies

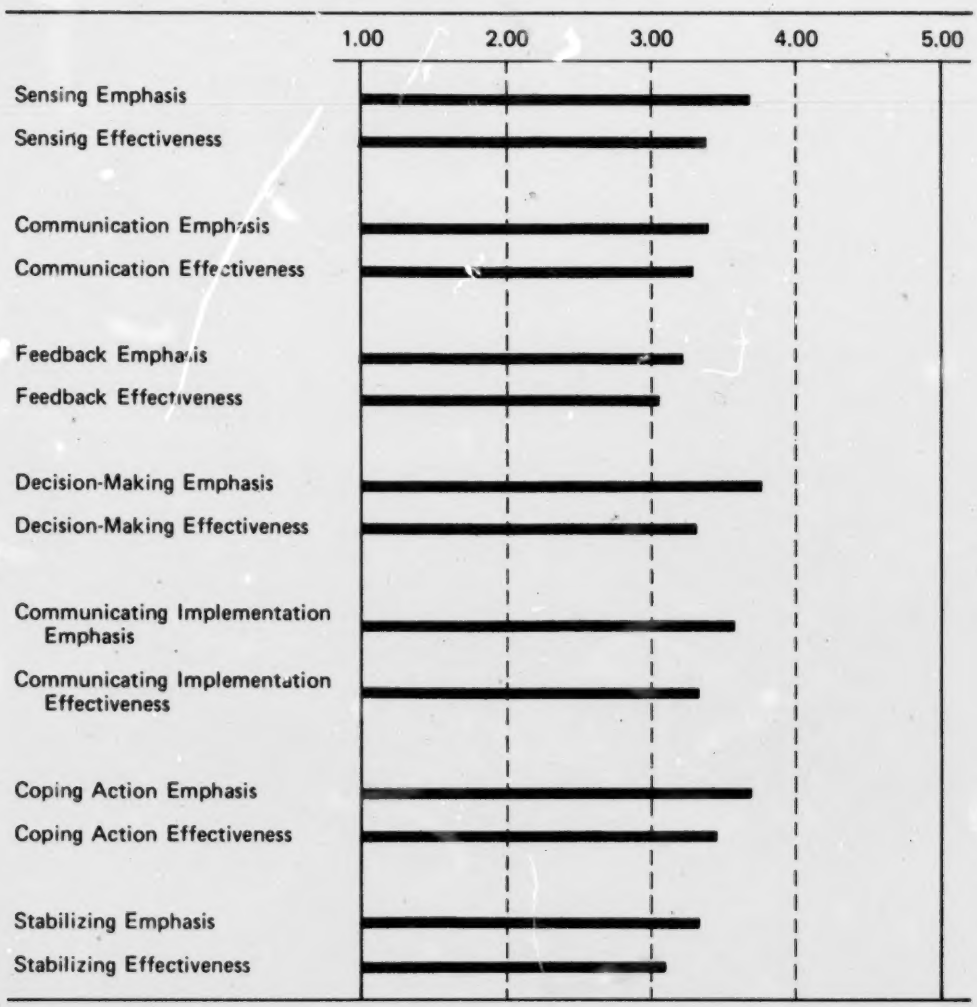

Figure 7

adapt rapidly and effectively to changing environmental requirements. Poor performance leads to organizational rigidity, characterized by slow adaptation to change, stereotyped responses to new and different situations, and the ultimate inability to satisfy requirements placed upon it.

Organizational competence and the processes it comprises offer a means of analyzing the internal functioning of any agency and of improving agency operations through the systematic development of the agency's proficiency in performing the processes. Despite the value of training individuals in formal programs, the maximum benefit to an organization comes from developing all of its elements to function together as a system.

Agency Emphasis on and Effectiveness of Processes
All Agencies

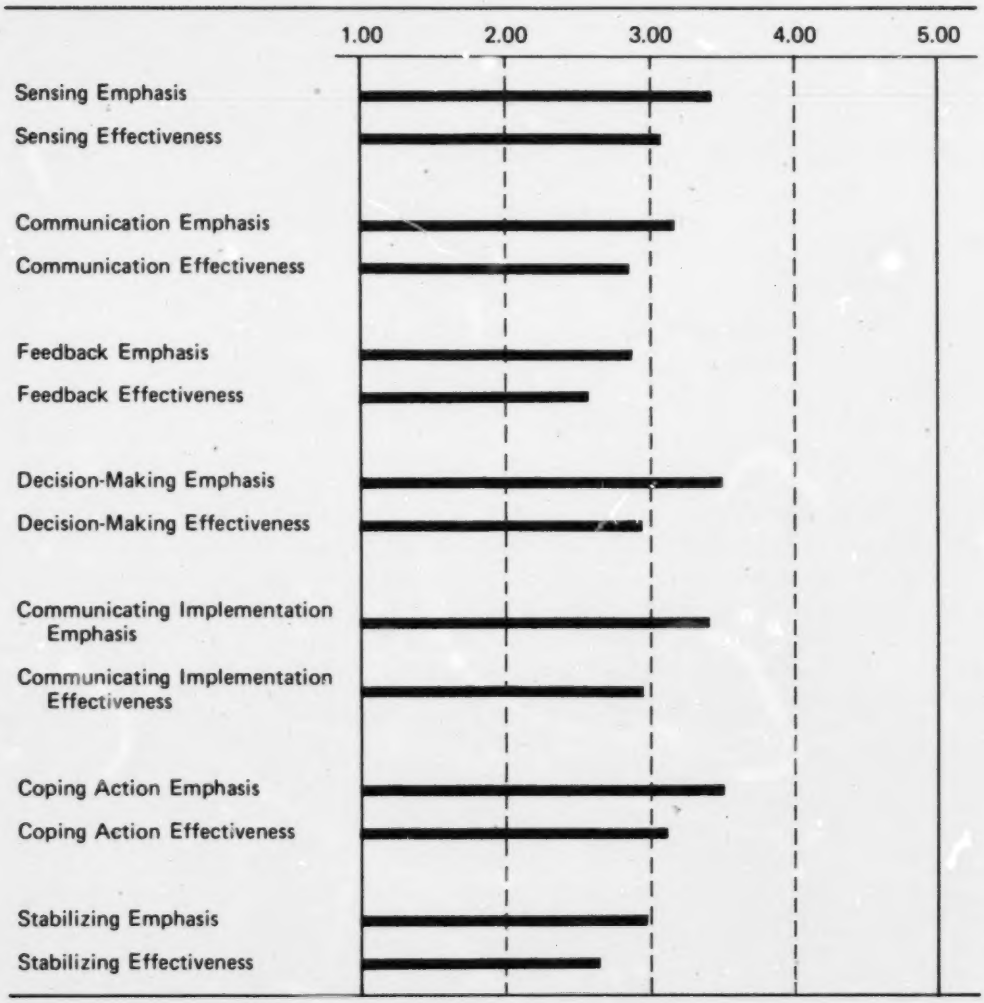

Figure 8

In recent years organizational development (OD) has achieved increasing prominence as an educational strategy. OD is based upon the premise that the only way to change an organization is to change the system within which its members work and live—to modify its fundamental processes mainly through the efforts of members themselves, although the impetus may come from external trainers or consultants.

Organizational development takes a variety of forms and focuses upon many different aspects of organization; however, central to all approaches is a strategy based upon developmental efforts carried out within an existing organization and during the course of ongoing activities. Through guided and controlled activities key staff members

examine the processes of the organization and modify them in directions intended to improve the functioning of the overall system.

For social welfare and rehabilitation agencies improvement would appear to be best accomplished through a form of organizational development which would include: (1) individual training in administrative and supervisory practices; and (2) continuous internal development and systematic modifications in agency practices based upon planned assessment of agency climate and agency competence.